

Week Ending Friday, February 24, 2006

**Remarks at a Republican Party of
Florida Dinner in Lake Buena Vista,
Florida**

February 17, 2006

Thank you all. Thanks for the warm welcome. Please be seated. Florida is a Republican State because Jeb Bush has done in office what he promised the citizens of Florida he would do. He has been a great Governor because he doesn't waver in the face of criticism, because he doesn't rely upon polls and focus groups to tell him what to think, and because he has a clear vision for a better future for the people of this State.

And on top of all that, he married well. I'm proud to be here with my sister-in-law, Columba Bush. I married well too. And Laura sends her love to Columba and Jeb and to our friends here in Florida.

It is so wonderful to be here to be able to thank the many people that helped me get to where I got and helped Jeb get to where he got. And, you know, you just can't take anything for granted in the political business. You can't say thanks enough, and particularly when I look around the room and see so many people that I know I can't thank enough. I'll try: Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for being here. Thank you for helping the party.

I'm proud to be here with Mel Martinez and Kitty—the United States Senator from the State of Florida. I want to thank Mel for standing strong with the administration and with me when it came time to ratify and confirm judges who would strictly interpret the Constitution—judges like Judge Roberts and Judge Alito. And it would sure be nice to have two United States Senators who would confirm conservative judges.

To that end, I welcome Congresswoman Katherine Harris. Thank you for coming. Congressman Ric Keller, Congressman Mike Bilirakis and Evelyn—where's Michael? There he is. Michael, good to see—flew

down on Air Force One, kind of wanted a little comfortable ride back home. *[Laughter]* John Mica is with us, and Pat. John, thank you for being here. Ginny Brown-Waite and Harvey—where's Ginny Brown? Thank you for coming. I appreciate Toni Jennings, the Lieutenant Governor. The attorney general, Charlie Crist, thank you for coming, Charlie; the chief financial officer, Tommy Gallagher.

I guess I shouldn't feel too uncomfortable reading the names back to back, you know? *[Laughter]* Thanks for running. Good luck. *[Laughter]*

I appreciate Charlie Bronson, the commissioner of agriculture. Thanks for being here, Charlie. Members of the statehouse—Senator Tom Lee, the president of the senate, as well as Allan Bense, the speaker of the house. It's good to see you, Allan, thank you. Look, my only advice to the speaker and the president, just do what the Governor tells you. It's real easy. *[Laughter]* That's all it takes. *[Laughter]* Not exactly the way they do it in Washington. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank Carole Jean Jordan, the chairman of the Florida Republican Party. You'd have thought they gave you a better seat than that, you know, after all the hard work. I want to thank Al Austin, who is the finance chairman, and his wife, Beverly. They're great friends of Jeb and mine. Thank you, Al. Jim Blosser, finance cochairman, thank you, Jim. And Jim MacDougald, I appreciate you all being here. Thanks for coming.

Finally, I've got to say something about Rich Crotty. Now, you might remember, Rich raised a little fellow named Tyler. *[Laughter]* I don't know if you remember the moment or not, but I got up there to give what I thought was going to be a stemwinder of a speech, and Tyler went flat asleep. *[Laughter]* So I asked Rich, where is Tyler? He said, "Well, Mr. President, he's taking a nap in anticipation of this address." *[Laughter]* Crotty, give him my best.

I am amazed by this number: The unemployment rate in Florida is 3.3 percent. It's an amazing statistic. It's a tribute to people in office who understand the role of Government is not to try to create wealth, but the role of Government is to create an environment in which people are willing to risk capital, in which small businesses grow to be big businesses, in which people can realize their dreams.

Feeney, I forgot to mention you. [*Laughter*] I was thinking about entrepreneurship and looked right at you. [*Laughter*] This Florida economy is strong, and so is the economy around the United States. We've overcome a lot. We've overcome attacks and corporate scandals and stock market collapses. And yet we're growing—amazing growth last year, over 3 percent growth, in spite of the fact we had high energy prices and a devastating hurricane.

And the reason why is because people feel there's an incentive to work in America. The tax relief we passed is working, and the United States Congress needs to make that tax relief permanent.

You'll hear them say in Washington, "Well, we need to balance the budget." And they're right. But then they say, "We're going to raise the taxes to balance the budget." I just want to warn you that that's not the way Washington works. It may sound good in the newspapers, but Washington works this way—if you give them more money, they will spend it. A tax increase, raising your taxes will mean there is more money to spend in Washington, and this economy isn't going to grow as strong. No, the way to balance the budget is keep pro-growth economic policies in place and be wise about how we spend your money.

There's uncertainty in our economy today. It's an interesting phenomenon, isn't it—you get unbelievable economic growth, and yet, people are worried. They're worried about changing jobs and not having a health care plan they can take with them. They're worried about having the skill set necessary to find the jobs of the 21st century. People are worried about China and India. And any time people worry about an economy, the reaction sometimes in our country is to wall ourselves off from the world, is to be protectionist.

That's the wrong attitude for the United States of America. America needs to be confident about the future because we intend to shape the future.

And that's what this Republican Party stands for. This Republican Party stands for leadership based upon sound principles. And let me share some ideas with you. To keep this economy the leader in the world, we got to make sure we do something about all these frivolous and junk lawsuits that are making it hard to risk capital. And I applaud your Governor, and I urge the Florida legislature to join him in enacting meaningful real tort reform.

We can become independent from oil from the Middle East. In order to remain a competitive nation, in order to remain a world leader, this country has got to use technology to get us off being hooked on oil. I know that may sound strange from a guy from Texas. [*Laughter*] But I sit there and think about the world on a daily basis, I see what happens when there's instability in parts of the world from which we get our oil. Listen, we're close to some amazing technological breakthroughs that will enable us to drive automobiles fueled by ethanol or have a plug-in hybrid battery that will make it much easier for you to use electricity when it comes to driving your cars.

Our party stands for innovation. Our party stands for change. And our party is going to stand for economic and national security by doing something about our dependence on Middle Eastern oil.

We're getting some things done. One of the commitments this Federal Government has made is to take care of the elderly. And when we go to Washington, DC, and the commitment is to take care of the elderly, it seems like to me, we want to make sure we do it in a way that is modern. So I saw an old, tired, stale Medicare system there. You know, this Government of ours would pay thousands of dollars for ulcer surgery but not one dime for the prescription drugs that would prevent the ulcer surgery from being needed in the first place. That's a waste of your money, and it wasn't that—we weren't

fulfilling a promise to our seniors. So we reformed Medicare. And today, seniors are getting modern medicine, thanks to the Republican Party.

And I want to tell you something. We've signed up 25 million people since January 1st for this new, reformed system. And sure, there's some glitches. But we're also the party that knows how to solve problems. And you mark my words; when seniors get settled in and realize what we have done for them, they will realize the Republican Party has delivered good medicine.

But we also know something else, that the best practice of medicine is in the private sector, and the most important relationship is between doctor and patient. And so we're going to continue to promote HSAs, health savings accounts, which puts patients in charge of their health care, and it helps small business afford insurance.

I want to say something about Jeb and education. This guy understands and so does our party, that we must challenge the soft bigotry of low expectations if we want the United States to be the leader in the world's economy. You cannot allow a system to develop in education that just simply shuffles kids through and hopes for the best. It doesn't work. It just doesn't work.

I remember when I was Governor of Texas, and we saw these statistics about kids coming out of high school not able to read. I decided—I dedicated myself then, just like Jeb has dedicated himself as Governor of Florida, to stop this business of socially promoting kids. You know who suffers? Inner-city African American kids suffer; families who don't speak English as a first language suffer. Ours is a party that believes in high standards and excellence when it comes to education.

And so we've said something pretty easy for people to understand. We said, "We're going to spend your money, but we're going to insist that schools measure, because you can't solve problems unless you diagnose the problem." Ours is the party that says no child will left behind—be left behind, and we're delivering on the results.

And so we're going to take this attitude of high standards and accountability and apply it to math, particularly in junior high

grades. If our kids do not have the skills of the 21st century, jobs are going to go somewhere else. In order for this country to remain competitive and the world leader, we must lead the world in research and development, and we must make sure we're educating the young scientists and engineers for the 21st century. And that's exactly what we're going to do.

I am always amazed to hear some talk about, well, you know, maybe the best days are behind us when it comes to our economy. You just got to know something about me. I think this country can do anything we put our mind to. I think we've got such a strong entrepreneurial spirit, such wonderful people, that we're a land of doers and accomplishes and risk-takers, that just given the right impetus and the right leadership, this country will still remain the preeminent economic leader in the world. And that's good for our people, and that means a higher living—standard of living.

I said in my State of the Union, we must reject isolationism. You see, when you get nervous about things or get a little despondent, the tendency is not only to wall yourself off but to withdraw from the world. And in the 21st century, we can't afford to do that. We can't afford to do it because there's an enemy that still lurks, an enemy that wants to attack the American people.

Today in Tampa, I was trying to explain to people how I make decisions, and I said, 9/11 affected my way of thinking, because I made the determination that so long as I'm the President of the United States, I will use everything at my disposal to protect the American people. That is our most solemn duty. I knew the further we got away from 9/11, the more likely it is people would kind of get comfortable and forget the—forget the challenges. And that's good, actually. It's hard to have economic growth if you walk around wondering when the next attack is going to occur. My job and the job of those of us in Washington is to constantly worry on behalf of the American people and to act on behalf of the American people so the American people can go about their business.

In order to be able to defeat an enemy, you've got to understand the nature of the enemy. I will tell you, these people are fierce

ideologues. They have a totalitarian view of the world. In other words, they want to decide how people think and act and how they worship the Almighty. It's their judgment that matters, not an individual's judgment. And they are nothing but coldblooded killers that kill innocent life at the drop of a hat in order to achieve their objectives.

They have clearly stated their objectives, and I hope you appreciate a President who listens carefully to the words of the enemy. See, my job is to see the world the way it is, not the way some would like it to be. And this enemy—[*applause*]. They have openly stated, it's just a matter of time for the United States to lose its nerve. To what end? They want to find safe haven in which to plan, plot, and strike the United States. They look forward to having safe haven in which they can develop weapons of mass destruction to use against our people. This is what the enemy has said.

They made a big mistake, however, when they attacked the United States. They roused a mighty nation that understands the stakes in this war on terror. And we will not relent, and we will not tire until we win the war on terror. So we're on the offense, and we will stay on the offense so long as I'm the President of the United States.

One of the lessons of September the 11th is, we've got to prevent attacks before they occur. There are some old enough out here to remember the era when oceans protected America, and if we saw a threat overseas, we could decide to deal with it if we wanted to, or not. But we no longer have that luxury. And so part of my thinking and part of my rationale for our policy is my clear understanding that we must defeat the enemy overseas so we do not face them here at home.

And that's what we're doing. We got a lot of good people on the hunt right now. It's hard to plot and plan if you're trying to hide from special forces of the United States military.

I also made it clear that if anybody harbors a terrorist, they're equally as guilty of murder; that if you provide safe haven for a terrorist organization, you're equally as guilty as the terrorist. And when the United States—and when the President of the United States

says something, for the sake of peace and stability, he better mean it. And I meant it when I told the Taliban to kick Al Qaida out. They refused to listen, and the United States military and our coalition rid Afghanistan of one of the most barbaric regimes in the history of mankind, and America is safer for it.

The whole world thought Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations Security Council voted resolution after resolution after resolution because they felt he had weapons of mass destruction. Members of the United States Senate, both Republicans and Democrats, felt he had weapons of mass destruction. Members of the United States Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, in voting to give me the right to use force to remove Saddam Hussein, felt he had weapons of mass destruction. So did I. And he didn't. But he had the capacity to make weapons of mass destruction. He was a state sponsor of terror. He was shooting at American airplanes. The decision I made was the right decision, and America is safer for it. [*Applause*]

Thank you all. And now we're implementing a strategy for victory, where Iran—I mean, Iraq becomes a ally in the war on terror, where this young democracy can sustain itself and defend itself, where this democracy becomes an example of hope for people in Iran and Syria, where this country can be an example for others who demand the natural rights of men and women.

I want to assure you this—that we have one goal in mind, and that's victory, and we're going to achieve it. And the Iraqi people are helping. Think about what happened in one year. We live in a world where, I guess, there's too many television stations or something—[*laughter*—but there's a lot of opinion; that's for sure. [*Laughter*] But in one year's time, these people who were threatened by brutal terrorists went to the polls three time, every time in increasing numbers, with more and more people voting from different religious groups, saying loud and clear to the world, we love our freedom; we want to be free. The political part of our strategy is working.

And now you'll watch the formation of a Government, and we're helping to make sure there's a unity government. But isn't it fun

to watch a Government being formed by people who had just finished living under the thumb of one of the most brutal tyrants in the history of mankind, Saddam Hussein?

Secondly, we'll help this country grow its economy by being wise about reconstruction money. We understand that in order for people to accept democracy, there has to be tangible benefits in their lives. But the good folks in Iraq are entrepreneurial, and businesses are beginning to flourish. Oh, I know sometimes it's hard to tell it, but it's happening.

And the final part of our strategy is, not only chase the terrorists down inside of Iraq but to train the Iraqis so they can take the fight to the enemy. And there are about 235,000 Iraqis now taking more and more control over their country. You know, one of the interesting measurements early on was when the enemy started bombing recruiting stations. I don't know if you remember that, but they'd drive by with a suicider or an IED and destroy people standing in line trying to serve their nation.

So one of the first questions I asked our commanders was, are you having any trouble finding anybody to sign up? The answer was, absolutely not. The people of Iraq want their freedom, and they're willing to stand up and defend their freedom. And the United States of America is proud to help them do so.

The enemy has got one weapon; they've got one weapon: their willingness to kill innocent life and have those images on the TV screen. The only way we can possibly lose is if we lose our nerve, and we're not going to lose our nerve so long as I am the Commander in Chief.

And the stakes are high, because not only are we defending ourself, not only are we preventing Iraq from becoming a safe haven for Al Qaida and their killers, we're helping spread freedom, which is an incredibly important part of achieving peace. I want the youngsters here to go back and think about the history of Europe over the last 100 years. Americans lost—America lost thousands of lives in World War I and World War II because of war on the European continent. Today, there are no wars on the European continent because of democracy. Democracies do not fight.

You can't imagine somebody saying, "Vote for me; I promise you war." [*Laughter*] Generally, the person doesn't get elected. [*Laughter*] People tend to run and say, "Vote for me; I'll promise to fight corruption," or, "Vote for me; I'll help your child get educated," or, "Vote for me; I'll help your health care system be modern." I believe that everybody in the world desires to be free. I believe there is an Almighty, and I believe the greatest gift of the Almighty, besides salvation, is freedom. And if you believe that, if you believe that, then you shouldn't be surprised that 11 million Iraqis have gone to the polls. And you shouldn't be surprised that Lebanon wants to be free. And you shouldn't be surprised that people are demanding their freedom in Afghanistan. Freedom is on the march, and we're laying the foundation of peace for generations to come.

I'm excited. I am excited to be your President. It has been a fantastic experience. I can't tell you how great it is to represent the United States of America around the world. We're a land of entrepreneurs and doers and dreamers. And when we find people that hurt, we help lead the world. One reason you don't become isolationists in this world is because—let me just say, to whom much has been given, much is required. And a lot has been given in the United States of America.

And the world requires our help in helping defeat HIV/AIDS on the continent of Africa, to feed the hungry, to provide relief in the outreaches of Pakistan, to help those who suffer from tsunami. No, ours is not only a nation laying the groundwork for peace, ours is a nation that's leading the world in compassionate help for people who suffer. We've got a great country. We've got a great country, and we're going to keep it great by making strong decisions that rally and play to the great strength of America, which is the hearts and souls of the American people.

Thanks for letting me be your President. Thanks for supporting Jeb. God bless. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:50 p.m. at Disney's Contemporary Resort. In his remarks, he referred to Kitty Martinez, wife of Senator Mel R. Martinez of Florida; Evelyn Bilirakis, wife of Representative Michael Bilirakis of Florida; Patricia Mica, wife of Representative John L. Mica of

Florida; Harvey Waite, husband of Representative Ginny Brown-Waite of Florida; Jim MacDougald, finance cochairman, Florida Victory 2006; and Mayor Richard T. Crotty of Orange County, FL. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

February 18, 2006

Good morning. This coming week, I will visit Wisconsin, Michigan, and Colorado to discuss our strategy to ensure that America has affordable, reliable, and secure sources of energy. The best way to meet our growing energy needs is through advances in technology. So in my State of the Union Address, I announced the Advanced Energy Initiative. We will pursue promising technologies that will transform how we power our vehicles, businesses, and homes so we can reduce our Nation's dependence on foreign sources of energy.

This morning, I want to speak to you about one part of this initiative: Our plans to expand the use of safe and clean nuclear power. Nuclear power generates large amounts of low-cost electricity without emitting air pollution or greenhouse gases. Yet nuclear power now produces only about 20 percent of America's electricity. It has the potential to play an even greater role. For example, over the past three decades, France has built 58 nuclear powerplants and now gets more than 78 percent of its electricity from nuclear power. Yet here in America, we have not ordered a new nuclear powerplant since the 1970s. So last summer, I signed energy legislation that offered incentives to encourage the building of new nuclear plants in America. Our goal is to start the construction of new nuclear powerplants by the end of this decade.

As America and other nations build more nuclear powerplants, we must work together to address two challenges: We must dispose of nuclear waste safely, and we must keep nuclear technology and material out of the hands of terrorist networks and terrorist states.

To meet these challenges, my administration has announced a bold new proposal called the Global Nuclear Energy Partner-

ship. Under this partnership, America will work with nations that have advanced civilian nuclear energy programs, such as France, Japan, and Russia. Together, we will develop and deploy innovative, advanced reactors and new methods to recycle spent nuclear fuel. This will allow us to produce more energy while dramatically reducing the amount of nuclear waste and eliminating the nuclear by-products that unstable regimes or terrorists could use to make weapons.

As these technologies are developed, we will work with our partners to help developing countries meet their growing energy needs by providing them with small-scale reactors that will be secure and cost-effective. We will also ensure that these developing nations have a reliable nuclear fuel supply. In exchange, these countries would agree to use nuclear power only for civilian purposes and forego uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities that can be used to develop nuclear weapons. My new budget includes \$250 million to launch this initiative. By working with other nations under the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, we can provide the cheap, safe, and clean energy that growing economies need while reducing the risk of nuclear proliferation.

As we expand our use of nuclear power, we're also pursuing a broader strategy to meet our energy needs. We're investing in technologies like solar and wind power and clean coal to power our homes and businesses. We're also investing in new car technologies like plug-in hybrid cars and in alternative fuels for automobiles like ethanol and biodiesel.

Transforming our energy supply will demand creativity and determination, and America has these qualities in abundance. Our Nation will continue to lead the world in innovation and technology. And by building a global partnership to spread the benefits of nuclear power, we'll create a safer, cleaner, and more prosperous world for future generations.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:37 a.m. on February 17 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on February 18. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 17 but